

**Work Zone Safety Task Force Meeting Minutes  
Area Maintenance Conference Room, Wenatchee  
January 13, 2005**

Welcome

Don Senn welcomed the Work Zone Safety Task Force (WZSTF) to Wenatchee and stressed how important work zone safety is to both construction and maintenance. He also talked about the excellent relationship North Central Region has with the Washington State Patrol (WSP).

Kevin Dayton presented Rex Swartz, WSDOT HQ Safety and Health Administrator, a framed certificate for his outstanding contribution to the WZSTF and the Traffic Oversight Committee. Rex is retiring from the WSDOT the end of January.

Lieutenants Warren and Brown from the Wenatchee area WSP talked to the group about troopers patrolling work zones, most of the offenses are for reckless driving. The officers asked WSDOT to consider in the design stage a place for troopers to safely pull a vehicle over; and they stressed the importance of WSP being involved in the pre construction conference in order to make a good WSDOT, contractor, WSP relationship. The officers also talked about how their data can help our support court cases. The one criticism the officers had was contractors leaving signs on the road when a project is moving, this makes it harder for the troopers to enforce. The troopers in North Central Region consider work zones part of their duty, they don't charge overtime, although they recognize when troopers are being paid to patrol a work zone, it's their only duty and they can be more thorough.

Washington State Patrol in Work Zones

With the revision of GC9131 there have been questions regarding the use of the WSP in work zones. The Construction, Design, Traffic and Plans Prep Manuals all contain guidance on this subject, and the original GC9131 and the original IL408 are still in use. Basically, the use of WSP in work zones is a regional issue. No further clarification is needed.

A letter will be sent to the WSDOT Regional Administrators stressing the importance of involving the WSP in the pre conference on projects that will impact traffic on state highways. The WSP encourages WSDOT to send emails to let them know what is going on in specific work zones, especially anything that impedes traffic. With cell phones at every site, local radio stations can also be notified of any impact to traffic.

Frank Newboles gave a power point presentation on the history of WSP use in work zones. He talked about the history, research, current practices and guidance, primary issues and proposed action of WSP use.

Review Business Objectives and Goals of the WZSTF

Kevin Dayton and Chris Christopher reminded the group that the region round table will not be where agenda items are taken from unless an item is formally introduced as such.

Chris and Kevin talked about the seven goals of the WZSTF and asked the members to look at these when introducing topics to the group so that the task force can be used in the most meaningful way.

#### Region Roundtable

*Olympic Region* – Steve Haapala talked about their push to be proactive and have the design and construction offices on board with work zone safety funding early on and involving the WSP. He pointed out how important it is to keep the flow maps updated and working throughout a project. He also talked about lump sum projects. Sue Babic talked about near misses. Recently WSP gave a driver a \$1278 ticket for passing a truck in a work zone. Flaggers are encouraged to write down license plates of offender in work zones. Even though a few drivers have been confused by the RC Flagman, the majority of drivers treat the RC Flagman with more respect than they do human flaggers (certified flaggers still monitor the overall flagging). There was a safety discussion regarding night work compared with weekend closures (with advanced notice and alternative routes).

*NW Region* – Jeff Peterson talked about demolition of a bridge on I-5 in Mt. Vernon and the detour around it (they were able to use a route that had minimal impact to city streets with no over height and over wide issues), the public was notified in advance and there were no complaints. Phil Fordyce said with lots of signing for no passing, stay in lane, narrow shoulders, etc. and with advance warning, upgrading reflectivity, clear delineation, portable HAR and VMS there have been fewer accidents on the 320 Street interchange project on I-5 in Federal Way.

NW Region Bonnie Nau said WSDOT and WSP hold quarterly review meetings with their public information officers, which have led to valuable coordination. When WSDOT provides detailed work zone activities and projects, WSP can assign troopers for work zone enforcement as needed.

NW Region has an issue regarding limited access control during construction, which has pointed to the need for site-specific traffic control plans. The conclusion was for a cultural change to incorporate new policies like eliminating or reducing staging yards within the right of way. There were cost and schedule implications but these were offset by safer entering and exiting lanes.

*NC Region* – Kirk Berg said that their construction is wrapped up for the season, but he stressed how important it is to communicate with the driving public through local radio stations, HAR, and VMS letting the public know where and when maintenance and construction crews would be on the roads. With advance notice they get very few complaints from the public. Communication is also necessary between the contractor and subcontractors. Specific traffic control plans are easier to work with. NC Region is always looking for ways to reduce the number of people in a work zone, the rakers and ticket takers are only on the road when they need to be. NC Region keeps the WSP advised of current work zone projects and keeps the contractors emergency contact information on site as well as with the WSP.

Ralph Robertson mentioned that ticket takers cannot be done away with altogether but suggested a pilot project of not using ticket takers in night paving projects. A pilot project will be a HQ Construction Office issue. Kevin Dayton asked for a variety of projects from the regions. Pat Moylan suggested using GPS on hauling trucks. Rick Gifford has worked with the FHWA and tested projects; he will get the data to Kevin and Chris.

*Eastern Region* – Ralph Robertson talked about project specific traffic control plans that spell out exactly what the contractor needs to do. Using more HAR, VMS, nighttime lane closures and advance notice has worked well. Spotters are a safety issue, but they can be very effective depending on how they are used and the individual who is doing the spotting. Ralph says occasionally they have an issue with HQ assistance; recently Eastern Region asked for assistance and ended up getting two GSP's which they didn't ask for. Ted Trepanier talked about variable/reduced speed limits and the lack of good guidelines. Frank explained that the old directive is going away and available options will be addressed in the new directive (a draft should be available this spring). If the legal notice says a work zone will have reduced speed, the speed limit reduction needs to be specific to the work zone. In looking at ways to make signs more mobile, one option is to have a series of signs that can be covered and uncovered as appropriate. Ted asked the other regions to get back to him if they have ideas on easier ways to sign a moving work zone and still be legally enforceable. Frank Newboles says this needs to be incorporated into the speed zone policy.

*South Central Region* – Rick Gifford says luckily they have no near misses to report. They are currently putting contract plans together for spring construction. Tom Root talked about the established detour on Highway 12 in the winter and the need for construction and maintenance to communicate so that alternate routes are plowed and sanded. Phil Fordyce asked if there are problems on the design side establishing detour routes with the local agencies. Don Senn said that not addressing the need for an approved detour route or use of alternate routes would be unacceptable, the RA level needs to know if regions are not getting the assistance they need. Amy said that when they are in the design process they include multiple detour routes and let the public know of several alternatives – talking to all the local agencies involved is crucial to the success of the plan.

Tom Root made fifteen 18-inch STOP/SLOW paddles in a high intensity and diamond grade reflective sheeting so that they are the same grade as STOP and work zone signs. The more reflective paddles cost about \$5.67 more each than the current issue paddles, but the more reflective paddles are more durable. Discussion ensued as to how to measure the effectiveness. Flaggers have specific criteria now as to nighttime reflectivity, perhaps the most useful application would be in an emergency situation without lighting. Several paddles were handed out, a report on their effectiveness will be made at the next meeting.

### Vehicle Lighting Standards

Pat Moylan spoke briefly on a policy to establish cost effective standards for warning light systems used on WSDOT vehicles and equipment. He supplied a handout for the group to review and report back at the next meeting. A discussion ensued on halogen vs. strobe lights, Chris Christopher determined this is a TEF issue not a WZSTF issue. Overall vehicle lighting issues will be discussed at the next meeting.

### Work Zone Conference

Marty Weed gave a brief background on the two previous Work Zone Conferences. The group discussed the merits of having a 2005 conference, including choosing the right employees to get information back to the regions and various agenda topics. The group felt that it would be impossible to offer a broad enough spectrum to be valuable to everyone. Also, other regularly scheduled meetings could cover necessary topics (such as conferences offered by the Construction, Maintenance, and Safety offices). Chris and Kevin suggested tabling the Work Zone Conference until 2006 and the group concurred. This conference could possibly be combined with the 2006 Transportation Technology Expo.

### Work Zone Crash Cushions and Barriers

Ken Smith talked to the group about the ADIEM attenuators. These devices have shown some signs of undesirable crash performance, they do not hold up well in harsh weather, and they can be difficult to repair and maintain. Ken asked if a GSP could be issued to say that WSDOT would not be using this product after a specific date. They are currently approved (in the Design Manual) for use as temporary devices. The group decided that the ADIEM attenuators could be deleted from the QPL list, and the product can be phased out. There are other similar products that should offer improved crash performance. Ken Smith will pursue this issue.

### Work Zone Safety Task Force Subcommittees

*Traffic Control Oversight* – Rex Swartz talked about TCS Training. He proposed a traffic control devices video could be created to show at contractor refresher classes. Frank is working the issue. NW Laborers and Evergreen Safety Council are the two TCS providers. Currently Oregon, Washington and Idaho have a reciprocal flagging agreement, Utah has asked to be added to the agreement. WSDOT has been voted to be the permanent chair to the TCOC, Rex feels that this position should be the WSDOT Safety Officer.

*Safety Products* – Marty said they are currently looking at four or five new products. One is a portable VMS that folds up and fits into the trunk of a car. It could be useful for incident response. An approved product link has been added to the WZSTF website. All current task force meeting minutes are on the web page as well.

*Technical* – Frank says that this committee's main focus the past year has been the rewriting of the Work Zone Traffic Control Guidelines Manual 54-44. Now it's time to go on to the other top issues.

### Work Zone Safety and Mobility Rule

Paul Harker, FHWA representative, talked about 23 CFR Section 630 Subpart J, the regulation on work zone safety and mobility published September 2004. The new rule emphasizes partnerships between FHWA and the states. The rule can be defined by three primary components: policy level provisions that help states implement an overall work zone safety and mobility policy for the systematic consideration and management of work zone impacts; state level processes and procedures that help states implement and sustain their respective work zone policies; and project level procedures that help states assess and manage the work zone impacts of individual projects.

Frank talked about the new rule. WSDOT is already doing a lot of what the new rules require, we just need to formalize a policy looking at all work zone impacts, including the whole corridor, businesses affected, and nearby roadways. There will be a FHWA workshop on how to implement the ruling, offering best practices to follow. Any policy changes will appear in the Design Manual.

### 2004 Construction Project Work Zone Report

Frank conducted 13 construction project work zone reviews throughout the state. The purpose of the review is to provide work zone awareness and act as a status check of current work zone conditions and practices. Frank briefly covered improvement opportunities, solutions and innovations, review team observations and input, and summarized by pointing out that work zone safety and mobility continue to be of the highest priority for WSDOT. He stressed that many of the improvement opportunities are common from year to year, and could be resolved through improved work zone design effort and contractor performance.

### Work Zone Safety Bulletin

Frank introduced a Draft Work Zone Safety Bulletin on flagger escape routes. Frank asked for any comments by the end of January.

### Reoccurring Work Zone Issues

A look at statewide construction project work zone reviews from the last several years indicates that there are several reoccurring issues and items that need further attention. Many of these issues are not necessarily hazardous by themselves, but when several are present on a construction project the overall level of safety is reduced. In many cases additional work zone oversight and communication with the contractor would probably address the reoccurring nature of these items. Issues include flaggers, temporary pavement markings, TMAs, buffer/shadow vehicles, advance warning, impacts to local roads, contractor performance, bikes and pedestrians, traffic control plans and standards, conflicts with existing markings and signs, work zone safety and traffic control oversight, temporary concrete barriers, reduced work zone speed limits, signal and illumination systems, safety and clear zone, warnings signs, and channelizing devices.

The regions asked for individual reports so that they can work to improve their situation, and follow up with spot reviews.

#### Traffic Control Manual 54-44

Copies of the M 54-44 were handed out to the task force. It's in a three-ring format so it will be easy to update. Short duration work zone information and detailed guidance for traffic control measures have been included. The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries and the Attorney General have been invited to review and comment on the manual, in particular the short duration work zone guidance.

#### Next Meeting

The WZSTF will meet at the Kent Maintenance Facility April 20, 2005.